



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC WORKING GROUP DELIVERS NEW REPORT: INFORMATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES

*Delivers broad analysis & recommendations about the rapidly changing media landscape;
Major findings include enormous opportunities and broadband-fueled innovation;
Specific serious challenges exist, particularly around local accountability reporting*

(Washington, D.C.) – The FCC Working Group on the Information Needs of Communities today delivered an in-depth analysis of the current state of the media landscape along with a broad range of recommendations. The staff-level report, titled “**Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age**” was delivered to the FCC at an open commission meeting.

FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said, “The report’s findings and recommendations contain a strong and hopeful throughline: there has never been a more exciting time than this broadband age to achieve our Founding Fathers’ vision of a free democracy comprised of informed and empowered citizens. As the report identifies and celebrates the potential of new communications technologies, it also highlights important gaps that threaten to limit that potential and harm communities.”

Addressing the gap in reporting, Chairman Genachowski continued, “Foremost is the disruptive impact the Internet has had on local news gathering. This is an emerging gap in local news coverage that has not yet been fully filled by other media. And the less quality reporting we have, the less likely we are to learn about government misdeeds.”

The report was produced by a group of journalists, scholars, entrepreneurs and government officials, led by **Steven Waldman, a successful digital media entrepreneur and former journalist**. Waldman worked for many years as a highly-respected reporter and editor at Newsweek, U.S News & World Report and WallStreetJournal.com. He was also the co-founder and CEO of Beliefnet.com, which won the National Magazine Award for General Excellence Online and was later acquired by FOX Networks Group.

Key findings and recommendations include:

- **Fueled primarily by broadband-enabled innovation, the news and information landscape is more vibrant than ever before.** Digital technology is creating a world of opportunity to keep the public informed in ways unimaginable just a few short years ago.

- **The disruptive impact of the Internet has enabled an unprecedented free exchange of ideas and information.** Breakthroughs in hyperlocal news and citizen journalism are on the rise, empowering individuals with a wealth of new information to better inform decision-making and engender more accountable government.
- **There are nonetheless serious gaps, including in local accountability reporting.** These deficits increase the likelihood of corruption, wasted tax dollars, worse schools and other problems for communities.
- **Accelerate move from paper to online disclosure.** Disclosure information required by the FCC should be moved online from filing cabinets to the Internet so the public can more easily gain access to valuable information. FCC should eliminate burdensome rules and replace the current system with a streamlined web-based disclosures focused on providing information about local programming.
- **Remove barriers to innovation and online entrepreneurship** by pushing for universal broadband deployment and adoption. Achieving this goal would remove cost barriers, strengthen online business models, expand consumer pools and ensure that the news and information landscape serves communities to the maximum possible benefit of citizens.
- **Target existing federal spending at local media.** Existing government advertising spending, such military recruiting and public health ads, should be targeted toward local media whenever possible. Each year, the federal government spends roughly \$1 billion in advertising without maximizing potential benefits to local media.

Over the course of a year, the group conducted more than 600 in-depth interviews, received thousands of public comments, held several open workshops, examined thousands of pages of existing research, and made numerous site visits to newsrooms across the country. The working group's report will complement a Federal Trade Commission report expected to be issued later this year, which will examine the profound transformation and new competitive dynamics of the news business.

Dr. Frank Wright, President & CEO of the National Religious Broadcasters said, “In an age where some have argued that the federal government has increased its reach over an increasing number of private sectors of American life, this report is a refreshing change. It refrains from imposing mandates, but instead recognizes opportunities to incentivize private media.”

Susan Crawford, Professor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law said, “The FCC has given the country a clear-eyed, hard-hitting, thoroughly-researched assessment of the profound economic problems undermining the institution of the press in America. The Commission has also clearly identified the crucial roles to be played by the nonprofit section – including foundations – and technology in supporting the civic function of the press in the future.”

Dean Nicholas Lemann, on behalf of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education deans said, “We applaud the Federal Communications Commission for undertaking the ambitious study on the information needs of communities. We should not let the laudable proliferation of freely available information generated by the digital revolution

blind us to the surpassing importance of original reporting by journalists. In producing this report, the FCC was responding to a real, pressing need.”

Responding to the report, **David Barrett, President & CEO of Hearst Television**, said, “We appreciate that the report suggests moving away from outdated reporting rules. We are open minded about the new proposals, especially given the productive process by which the report arrived at its conclusions, and will consider them carefully.”

"Of the areas considered by the Knight Commission, our nation has made progress in universal broadband access but is still not doing what it could on local accountability journalism, government transparency, digital and media literacy, public media innovation and the revitalization of public libraries," **said Alberto Ibarguen, President of Knight Foundation** "We're hopeful that the FCC's report will move us from debate to action."

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**For more information about the Information Needs of Communities report, visit:
www.fcc.gov/infoneedsreport**